

BLACK PANTHER

COUNTDOWN TO THE
WEDDING OF THE CENTURY

by
J. MICHAEL
WHITE



PREVIOUSLY

There are some places you just don't mess with. Wakanda is one of them. Since the dawn of time, that African warrior nation has been sending would-be conquerors home in body bags. While the rest of Africa got carved up like a Christmas turkey by the rest of the world, Wakanda's cultural evolution has gone unchecked for centuries, unfettered by the yoke of colonization. The result: A hi-tech, resource-rich, ecologically-sound paradise that makes the rest of the world seem primitive by comparison.

Ruling over all this is the Black Panther.

The Black Panther is more than just the embodiment of a warrior cult that's served as Wakanda's religious, political and military head since its inception. The Black Panther is the embodiment of the ideals of a people. Anyone who'd dare to make a move on Wakanda must go through him.

T'Challa and Storm of the X-Men have announced their engagement. With the wedding on the horizon, the couple seek out long lost family members and begin preparations for their nuptials; however, there's a few individuals out there that aren't too happy after not making the invite list. They have plans for this joining of man and mutant...

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THE APARTMENT
OF LUKE CAGE AND
JESSICA JONES...

NO, THE
WHOLE CLUB.
THESE ARE
V.I.P.'S--I DON'T
WANT NOBODY
KNOWING WHO
WAS THERE.

PLAUSIBLE
DENIABILITY, YOU
GOT ME? I WANT
THE WHOLE BLOCK
SHUT DOWN, AND THE
BLOCKS SURROUNDING
THE BLOCK.

IS SERENITY STILL THERE?
UH-HUH...WHAT ABOUT
JADE?

AND ECSTASY?
CAN SHE STILL
DO THAT TRICK
WITH--

HEY,
HONEY,
WHAT YOU
WORKING
ON?

UH...WORK.
PERSONAL
BUSINESS.

UH-HUH.



Bride of the Panther 4 BACHELOR PARTY

REGINALD
HUDLIN
WRITER

SCOT
EATON
PENCILS

KLAUS
JANSON
INKS

DEAN
WHITE
COLORS

VC'S RANDY
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DESPITE THEIR HIGH PUBLIC PROFILE, T'CHALLA AND ORORO ARE VERY PRIVATE PEOPLE. BUT CONSIDERING THE MAGNITUDE OF THE EVENT, THEY HAVE GRACIOUSLY CONSENTED TO THIS PRESS CONFERENCE.

WHO'S YOUR BEST MAN?

**WHO'S
DESIGNING
THE DRESS?**

HOW DID HE PROPOSE?

**CAN WE
SEE THE
RING?**

RINGS ARE NOT TYPICALLY PART OF THE WAKANDAN MARRIAGE RITUAL.

Answer

**BUT IN
ANTICIPATION OF
SUCH QUESTIONS...**

00000000 HHHH!

KING T'CHALLA, YOUR HAPPY EVENT IS OCCURRING WHEN THERE'S A LOT OF CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE PROPER ROLE OF SUPER HEROES IN SOCIETY. WITH CONGRESS DEBATING THE PROPOSED **SUPERHUMAN REGISTRATION ACT**, TELL US: WOULD YOU EVER CONSIDER A REGISTRATION ACT IN YOUR COUNTRY?

IT IS NOT APPROPRIATE FOR ME TO COMMENT ON U.S. DOMESTIC POLICY. HOWEVER, I WILL SAY I FOUGHT ALONGSIDE MANY AMERICAN SUPER HEROES, AND I HAVE FOUND ALMOST ALL OF THEM TO BE MEN AND WOMEN OF GREAT COURAGE WHO HAVE PUT THEIR LIVES, AND THE LIVES OF THEIR LOVED ONES, ON THE LINE FOR THE SAKE OF MANKIND.

YES, BUT IN YOUR OWN COUNTRY?

I HAVE FACED DISCRIMINATION AS AN AFRICAN, AS A WOMAN AND AS A MUTANT MY ENTIRE LIFE. WAKANDA IS NOT A COUNTRY THAT WASTES PRECIOUS HUMAN RESOURCES ON **WITCH-HUNTS**. THAT'S WHY IT LEADS THE WORLD IN BOTH TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES AND HUMAN RIGHTS.

WE HOPE OUR WEDDING WILL BE A SYMBOL OF LOVE THAT UNITES ALL PEOPLES.

CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP! CLAP!



A LITTLE RETAIL THERAPY NEVER HURT ANYBODY.

I JUST NEEDED TO GET AWAY FROM SPEECHES AND SEATING CHARTS.

I DON'T KNOW HOW YOU ARE MANAGING IT ALL, ORORO.

YOU'D THINK THAT ALL THESE YEARS OF MAINTAINING A LOOK WHILE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE WOULD MAKE SOMETHING LIKE THIS EASY.

PREACHING TO THE CHOIR, BUT SPEAKING OF MAINTAINING A LOOK—DO YOU BLOODY DRY YOUR OWN HAIR, I MEAN, NATURALLY?

IT'S THE ONLY WAY I COULD KEEP IT THIS LONG.

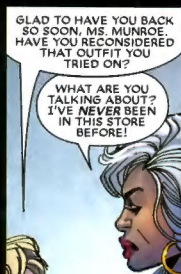
HA! I KNEW IT! WAIT TILL I TELL JEN. YOU KNOW—SHE—HULK.

"STORM SPILLS BEAUTY SECRETS"—COVER OF THE NEXT ISSUE OF O!

O? Y'KNOW, O? OPRAH'S MAGAZINE?

NO. WELL, GET TO KNOW IT, BECAUSE YOU'RE ABOUT TO BE THE MOST HIGH-PROFILE MUTANT IN THE WORLD, AND OPRAH WILL BE CALLING.





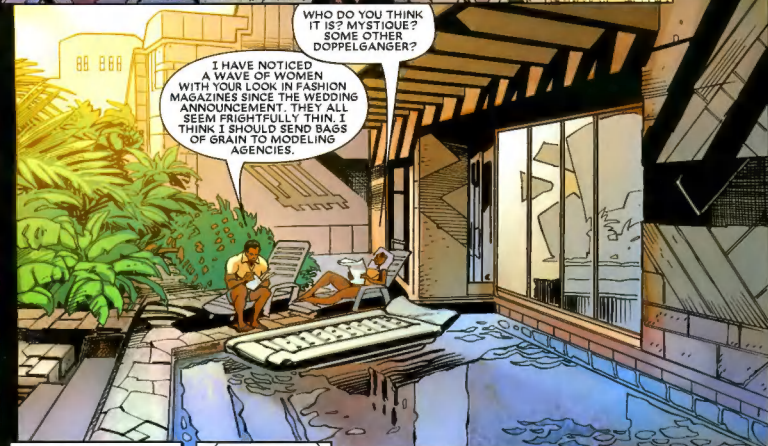


LATER...

CAN YOU
IMAGINE THAT--
SOMEONE
IMITATING
ME?

WHO DO YOU THINK
IT IS? MYSTIQUE?
SOME OTHER
DOPPELGÄNGER?

I HAVE NOTICED
A WAVE OF WOMEN
WITH YOUR LOOK IN FASHION
MAGAZINES SINCE THE WEDDING
ANNOUNCEMENT. THEY ALL
SEEM FRIGHTFULLY THIN. I
THINK I SHOULD SEND BAGS
OF GRAIN TO MODELING
AGENCIES.



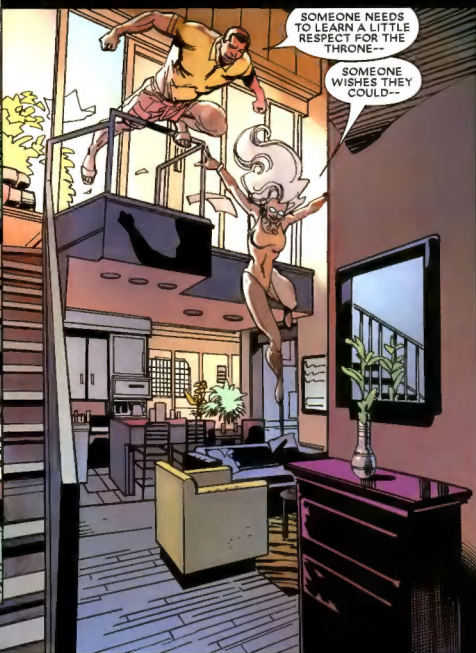
VERY FUNNY. BUT
SERIOUSLY, DON'T YOU
THINK WE NEED TO FIND
THIS PERSON BEFORE
THEY DO SOMETHING
THAT MISREPRESENTS US?
WHAT IF SHE TEAMS UP
WITH A MAN IN A CAT
SUIT AND THEY STEAL
AN OLD WOMAN'S
PURSE?

PEOPLE WILL
THINK WHAT THEY
WILL. DON'T YOU
READ WHAT THEY SAY
ABOUT US ON THE
INTERNET?

T'CHALLA! ARE
YOU GOOGLING
YOURSELF?

PART OF MY
RESPONSIBILITIES
INCLUDE--

GOOGLER!



SOMEONE NEEDS
TO LEARN A LITTLE
RESPECT FOR THE
THRONE--

SOMEONE
WISHES THEY
COULD--



YOU
DON'T
THINK--

--YOU CAN
GET AWAY
FROM ME?

WELL,
ACTUALLY--



--YES.

FWOOOOOOOSH



YOU'RE GOING
TO PAY FOR THIS,
WOMAN!

GET USED TO
IT THE MOTHER
CARRIES THE
X GENE, YOU
KNOW.



T'CHALLA?
WHERE
DID YOU
GO?



MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE
IN AFRICA...

IF T'CHALLA WAS SERIOUS
ABOUT MAINTAINING PEACE
BETWEEN OUR TWO TRIBES,
HE WOULD HAVE MARRIED
ONE OF THE BEAUTIFUL
WOMEN FROM OUR
CLAN.



NOT ONLY
DOES HE MARRY
SOMEONE FROM
OUTSIDE OF OUR
REGION--

Noooooo!

--BUT HE
DOESN'T EVEN
SEND ME A
WEDDING
INVITATION!

THE NEXT MORNING...

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO DO FRIDAY NIGHT? WE'RE INVITED TO DINNER AT THE WHITE HOUSE AND A PARTY AT PRINCE'S HOUSE. IF YOU WANTED TO DO BOTH, WE COULD MAKE IT TO L.A. FROM D.C. IN TIME--



ACTUALLY, I HAVE PLANS.

PLANS?



SO, THIS IS A "BACHELORETTE" PARTY? WHO'S THE STRIPPER? EROS?

OH PLEASE. I DON'T THINK SUE RICHARDS WOULD EMBARRASS HERSELF THAT WAY.

ROGUE WOULD.

DON'T YOUR LITTLE FRIENDS HAVE SOMETHING SIMILAR PLANNED FOR YOU? WHY DON'T YOU DO THAT FRIDAY NIGHT?



THE GIRLS WANTED TO TAKE ME OUT FOR A NIGHT ON THE TOWN BEFORE THE WEDDING. I AGREED.



WHAAA-HOOO!!

A

I KNOW YOUR JAW'S
TIGHT NOW, T'CHALLA,
BUT YOU WILL NOT
REGRET THIS.

I AM
ALREADY
REGRETTING
THIS.



THEN WHY GO AT
ALL, T'CHALLA?

BECAUSE YOU
ASKED ME TO,
LOGAN.



ME?



YOU LOOKED OUT FOR STORM DURING
HER JOURNEY BACK THROUGH AFRICA.
WHEN I ASKED YOU TO SECURE A
PACKAGE FOR ME, AND BRING IT
TO SAFETY, YOU DID. FOR THAT,
I AM GRATEFUL.

SO WHEN YOU
EXTENDED AN
INVITATION TO ME,
I ACCEPTED.





NO, I SAID IN BLUE! AND SHOES TO MATCH!

IF YOU PLEASE ME, YOUR STORE WILL BE MENTIONED IN EVERY MAGAZINE IN THE WORLD. AND MY HUSBAND, THE BLACK PANTHER, WILL LOOK KINDLY UPON YOU.

AH-HA!

PRINCESS ZANDA! THE PARIS HILTON OF AFRICA! SO IT'S YOU THAT'S BEEN IMPERSONATING ME!



IMPERSONATING YOU? YOU FLATTER YOURSELF.

I JUST HEARD YOU SAY YOU'RE MARRYING THE BLACK PANTHER!



I AM. YOU DON'T HONESTLY BELIEVE HE WANTS TO BE WITH ANYONE BUT ME, DO YOU?

ONCE I TELL T'CHALLA HE DOESN'T NEED TO SETTLE, THAT I WON'T REJECT HIM, HE'LL BE WITH HIS TRUE LOVE.

WHAT IS THIS--AN EPISODE OF "FLAVOR OF LOVE"?

IF YOUR COUNTRY SPENT AS MUCH ON EDUCATION AS YOU DO ON HANDBAGS, THEY COULD PRODUCE A PSYCHIATRIST WHO COULD TREAT YOUR PSYCHOSIS.



DON'T HATE ME BECAUSE I'M BEAUTIFUL. STREET URCHIN.



MAIL TO THE KING!

Dear Panther People!

I know that it's late to be commenting on this issue, but wow, that cover! Too bad it had little to do with the story inside, but it would certainly be suitable for framing!

As regards the story, I loved it! What's not to love about T'Challa, Luke Cage, Blade, and Brother Voodoo facing a post-Katrina New Orleans filled with vampires?

Another highlight? The Panther going into battle with full armor, brandishing the ebony blade of Holy Mother Church? You boys have a flair for the dramatic!

Last, but certainly not least, Monica Rambeau brings killing sunlight light to the vampire horror! Proving that while black men can fight, it's black women who will "light you up"!

Why aren't there more comics like this? Great job!

Ed Francis
St. Louis, MO

Four months later. Man, you guys really loved that arc? It's out in a sweet, sweet trade paperback, aptly titled **BLACK PANTHER: BAD MUTHA**. Buy one for your mother. We recommend it, Mr. T recommends it, and you don't want to mess with those recommendations.

Fellow Pantherphiles:

In this opportunity, I want to congratulate the writer for introducing some sensuality and eroticism in his storylines. There's nothing wrong with it, those are valid elements of the storytelling technique and an important part of a human being. It's good to see comic characters acting more like real people than like paper automatons without volume and content. What am I talking about?, some may ask. About a masterfully conceived scene in **BLACK PANTHER** #15, where Hudlin, in a demure and suggestive manner, but at the same time in an explicit and obvious one—for the eye of the sharp reader—shows us a sensual, erotic dimension of the characters' personalities that is very welcome for the sake of a mature, challenging, more realistic reading experience.

Anyway, Reggie does it so finely, that for those who are still asking themselves what I'm talking about, there's nothing to be offended or ashamed by, because at the same time this scene can be interpreted as if nothing of what I'm talking about actually happened. You know what I mean, don't ya?? On the jet airplane.

Congratulations again.

Always at your service,
Guido Cuadros F.A.
Lima, Perú

Are you seeing what I think you think you're seeing? Aw, yeah!

Bravehearts,

I'm so proud of this book, the character and the direction the series is going in. Mr. Hudlin has let the world see a glimpse of character greatness in the Black Panther. You guys are using all of the heroes that I love, and that no other writer could do a good series with: Namor, Power Man, Blade, and I'm waiting for Bishop. Hopefully he'll be in the uniform from **BISHOP: THE LAST X-MAN**. I've got to give extra credit to Power Man, Luke Cage. Hudlin has done the best Cage I have ever seen.

This is the first time I've seen in comics a real African-American super hero. I mean that with all sincerity, man. Not only is this guy (T'Challa) smart intellectually and strategically, he's a smart Warrior Physically. And you show it! I appreciate this with everything in me.

My kids read comics also. Patriot from **YOUNG AVENGERS** has my oldest hooked, but it was a must that every comic reader around me had their own issue of **BLACK PANTHER** #1. The first arc was more than I expected. It was strength and hope in one package, for the series, for the character, for comics as a whole. "Impressed" is too small of a word for the experience. Issue 14 is a standout, fellas. It was the best stand-alone of the book.

Real to Real though, after the first five issues, the stories are rolling at breakneck speed (not 14). Things are happening too fast. The fights, the conflicts... I want to enjoy them like a good steak. To take the villains as creditable threats or my man as worthy to stand on a stage with Batman or Wolverine...the A list superstars, the conflicts, the fights have to be monumental, not just big names and some humor. It needs dramatics. This is just one man's opinion. Now to get my bid off for a new team of Avengers with a new name, of course. My lineup would be:

1. Black Panther: Leader
2. Storm: Elemental goddess
3. Blade: Kick@\$\$ weapons expert (Hawkeye, Punisher, Wolverine feel me?)
4. Namor: Land, sea and air one-man army

5. War Machine: (with Wakandan technology)

6. Horus: (see **NEW WARRIORS** #12) I need a Braveheart version (Falcon: new powers?)

7. Photon: Power and love conflict

8. Sersi: Purpose is to get Dane's sword back

9. Silver Claw: Any animal at any time

Now bring on any team, any league, united villain group, or planet-eating threats. We hold it down. International or interstellar, we are **VANGUARD**!

I'm Down with the King
Lakethius Johnson

Check out this photo of Lakethius' two boys. 'Nuff said!



Not that I need to remind you, but next there's this little wedding that we're going to be having. Captain America and Iron Man will be there, along with a slew of other guests from the X-Men to the Avengers, and maybe, just maybe, a villain or twenty might show up. Then again, naaaah! We'd never do something like that in a Marvel comic.

Before I sign off this month, it's time to say auf wiedersehen. After five years here at mighty Marvel, your man Cory is moving on. It's been one heck of an experience, and working on **BLACK PANTHER** has been one of the absolute highlights of it all. My thanks go out to Reggie, Scot, Klaus, Dean and Axel for bucking the trend month-by-month and putting a voice on the comics rack that's sorely missing. You've got my #2.99.

—Cory

NEXT ISSUE:



PANTHER #18: WEDDINGS & WAR IN WAKANDA!

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